

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Has the Holy Spirit Changed Me?" (Colossians 3:1-4, Joel 2:28-32)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 9/8/2013

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As we continue our series of messages on the preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the life of the Christian, I hope that you will turn with me, once again, if you are able, to the primary passage we are considering, Colossians chapter 3, beginning at verse one. Let us once again hear the words of God the Holy Spirit given to us through the Apostle Paul in Colossians chapter 3, beginning at verse one:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

### **New Birth and A Sanctified Life: Impossible Without the Spirit**

In our last message, we began to consider the most neglected aspects of the doctrine of the person and work of God the Holy Spirit in our time. We began to consider the doctrine of the new birth, the way in which a person is saved. And we began to consider, along with that, the doctrine of the sanctification of the believer in Christ. The doctrine of the new birth by the Spirit and the doctrine of the sanctification of the believer by the Spirit are inseparable.

We saw that it is impossible for an individual to become a Christian without the work of God the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit applies to individuals the salvation that was purchased by the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Ephesians chapter 1 verses 13 and 14 tell us that the Holy Spirit is the guarantee, or

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the down payment of our redemption which will be culminated when we rule and reign with Christ in future glory.

Furthermore, God the Holy Spirit is the One who is at work within each and every believer in Christ, conforming the believer to the image of Jesus Christ. Scripture calls that work of God the Holy Spirit the work of sanctification.

The essence of that work of the Spirit is the exhortation, the command, that we find here in Colossians chapter 3. The believer has been raised with Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. The believer is being set apart, sanctified, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The essence of that work within us is that we are to "seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God." We are to set our minds, our attention, our affections, "on things above, not on things on the earth."

### **The Great and Vital Question**

That is because, as the Apostle Paul tells us in Colossians chapter 3 verse four, the believer in Christ has died as far as the things of this world are concerned. Your new life as a believer, your eternal life, "is hidden with Christ in God." Therefore, your life in this present world must reflect the fact that you belong to Christ, that you are risen with Christ, that you are dead to this world.

The distinction between those who have the Spirit of God within them and those who do not is this simple fact: Those who do have the Spirit of God dwelling within

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them give the evidence of the new birth, the evidence of a changed life. Those who are not in Christ, those who do not have the Holy Spirit living within them, do not demonstrate these things.

And so, as a believer in Christ, you must continually be asking yourself this question, and you must use the Word of God as your yardstick in answering it. The question you must ask is this: Is there this change in my life? Has God the Holy Spirit changed me? Is my thinking Heaven-bound, or is it earthbound? Is it the things of earth that attract me, or the things of Heaven? Is it the things of earth that hold my attention, or the things of Heaven? Is it the things of earth that have value for me, or the things of Heaven, and of eternity, and of Christ and His Word?

### **What You Must Know to Answer It**

Before you can honestly answer that question, you need to understand what the Bible says about the person and work of God the Holy Spirit. This is a much neglected aspect of Biblical teaching within the nominally evangelical church today. And so, I believe we must take time to focus our attention upon this very vital doctrine of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. It is a doctrine on which there is a great deal of neglect in the church today, and a great deal of false teaching, and a great deal of confusion.

I mentioned in our last message that a great deal of this confusion regarding the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is because there is a serious and severe lack of

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expository preaching in the nominally evangelical church today. When the preacher of a Bible believing church preaches the Scriptures in an expository manner, when the preacher explains the Word of God chapter by chapter and verse by verse to the people, we saw that the natural result of that kind of preaching will be that people will see and understand sound doctrine. They will see the connections and relationships within the Word of God. They will see that the Word of God presents a system of doctrine that we must understand and believe.

It is the sacred job of the preacher to bring out those connections by means of expository preaching. And in the case of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, this involves preaching the connections that we find in the Word of God that begin in the Old Testament, and extend into the New Testament.

We find the coming of the Holy Spirit prophesied in the Old Testament in the second chapter of the book of Joel. We find the Lord Jesus Christ explaining that promise to His disciples in John chapter 14. We find the Lord Jesus repeating that promise, as we have seen, in the book of Acts chapter 1.

And then, we find the actual coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter 2. And we find the work of the Holy Spirit being carried out in the rest of the book of Acts. And we also find the teaching, especially in Paul's epistles, that under the New Covenant in which we now live, each and every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is personally the temple of the Holy Spirit of God.

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## **The Difference the Spirit Makes**

At the end of our last message, we asked a very critical question: What are the key characteristics of the indwelling of the Spirit of God sent from Heaven in the life of the believer? What is it that changes in an individual when the Holy Spirit takes up residence within him? Or to put it a different way, what is it that makes the difference between the person whose thinking is focused on the things of Heaven, and the person whose thinking is still focused on the things of earth?

At the end of our last message I put before you six key differences that we find in the Word of God.

First of all, the individual who has been indwelt by the Spirit of God from Heaven has an understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that no one else has.

Secondly the Christian who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit has an understanding of the Word of God that no one else has or can have. This is something that the unbeliever cannot have and does not have.

Thirdly the individual who has been indwelt by the Spirit of God from Heaven has an understanding of his position when he was still outside of Christ that no one else has.

Number four, the individual who has been indwelt by the Spirit of God from Heaven, the individual who has become a Christian by the power of God and the

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grace of God, has an understanding of his present position in Christ that no one else can have.

Number five, the Christian indwelled by the Spirit of God from Heaven has an understanding of his future position in Christ that the unbeliever cannot have.

And number six, the Christian, the individual who has been indwelled by the Holy Spirit of God from Heaven, has access to power in this present life that no unbeliever can have.

Now these are powerful statements. There is nothing more important for the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to understand. We must have a firm grasp of these things, and we will only have that firm grasp, we will only have a growing understanding of these things, as we carefully study the Word of God.

The Bible is our only authority in understanding these things. The Bible is our only source of truth in understanding these things. In Colossians chapter 2, the Apostle Paul has warned us that these things are not to be found in systems of worldly philosophy. A proper understanding of these things is not to be found in man-made doctrines, and man-made religions. A proper understanding of these things and a proper response to these things is not to be found in any system of legalism, trying to please God and to earn merit with God through our own good works.

Salvation is all of grace. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is all of grace. We do

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not bring the Holy Spirit into our lives and into our being by our own efforts or our own strength. God does not change our focus from the things of earth to the things of Heaven in any way except by His grace through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

### **Not a "Second Blessing"**

I cannot emphasize this point enough: The indwelling of God the Holy Spirit in each and every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is not a "second blessing." The gift of God the Holy Spirit is the first and greatest of all the spiritual blessings of the Christian life.

The gift of God the Holy Spirit to the believer at the time he becomes a believer – at the time he experiences the new birth – that gift of God the Holy Spirit is the great gift of God from which and through which all the other gifts of God to the believer in Christ proceed. The gift of God the Holy Spirit at the new birth is the gift of God that makes possible all of the other gifts and blessings of new life in Christ, both here in this present world and in the world to come.

### **A Necessary Understanding**

And so, before we consider these six assertions that I stated a few moments ago in more detail, I believe that it is important for me, if I am to be a faithful and true expositor of the Word of God, to remind you of the unfolding doctrine of the person and work of the Holy Spirit as we find it in the Word of God.

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The doctrine of the person and work of the Holy Spirit is a vast and deep doctrine. We could spend many hours in many messages exploring the depths and the breadth and the height of the doctrine of God the Holy Spirit. Our time does not permit us to do that in these present broadcasts. However, I would encourage you to investigate the materials on the doctrine of the person and work of God the Holy Spirit that you will find on our website, and in particular in an area of the website that we call the Bible Knowledgebase. At the end of this broadcast, we will be giving you more information about how you can access the Bible Knowledgebase.

But in these broadcasts, I do want to briefly give you an overview of the connections that we find in the Word of God, beginning in the Old Testament and extending through the New Testament. We need to understand those connections in the Word of God in order to understand more fully exactly why God the Holy Spirit takes up residence within every believer in Christ during this age. We need to understand those connections in the Word of God in order to understand more fully the work that God the Holy Spirit is presently performing in you – if indeed you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for your salvation.

### **Joel's Prophecy of the Coming of the Spirit**

And so, let us begin in the book of Joel, where we find the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell each and every believer in Christ during this present age. Please turn with me, if you are able, to the book of Joel in the Old Testament. The prophetic passage I want to call your attention is found in the book of Joel

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beginning in chapter 2, verse 28. Joel chapter 2, beginning at verse 28. Please follow along as I read some of the verses in this passage.

And it shall come to pass afterward that I [the Lord] will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also on my menservants and my maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

Verse 32:

And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the remnant whom the Lord calls.

This is the prophecy that we find the Apostle Peter quoting in Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost, when he explains the phenomenon of the 120 believers in the upper room at Jerusalem speaking in other languages, proclaiming the wonderful works of God.

Let me call your attention to three things in particular in this prophecy in the book of Joel.

### **A "Pouring Out"**

First of all, note in verse 28 that the Lord says that he will "pour out" the Holy Spirit. Up until the time of the fulfillment of this prophecy in the very early days of

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the New Testament church, God had not "poured out" His Spirit in a general way. We find in the Old Testament record that God gave His Spirit to specific individuals, for specific periods of time, and for specific purposes.

In some cases it was in order that an individual might do a particular extraordinary work for God. We find, for example, that God gave his Holy Spirit to a man named Bezaleel, who was an artisan, to whom God gave the task of crafting and building and preparing the beautiful and intricate coverings and furnishings and curtains for the tabernacle in the wilderness. We find other occasions in the Old Testament when the Holy Spirit came upon particular individuals so that they might speak on behalf of God as His prophets.

But then we have this prophecy in the book of Joel, which tells us that it would be God's plan, in this present age of the New Testament church, to "pour out" His Spirit. The presence and work of the Holy Spirit would no longer be limited to certain individuals for certain periods of time and for certain specific purposes. No, God says, in this coming time I will "pour out My Spirit on all flesh."

### **Upon "All Flesh"**

This brings us to our second point. Not only would God "pour out" the Holy Spirit but He would also give the Holy Spirit to "all flesh." Now the question we must ask is what is meant here by the words "all flesh"?

The whole body of Scripture makes it clear that God is not saying that He would

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pour out the Holy Spirit on both the saved and the unsaved. What He is saying is that He would pour out the Holy Spirit on Gentile believers as well as Jewish believers.

We find this confirmed in the opening verses of Joel chapter 3, where God says that He would not only "bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem," but would also "gather all nations."

### **Upon a "Remnant"**

But Joel chapter 2 verse 32, just before that, tells us that those whom God would call would be a "remnant." And this brings us to our third point: Joel's prophecy tells us that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on a limited number, a remnant. And who are that limited number? Joel chapter 2 verse 29 tells us that that limited number are "My menservants and... My maidservants." Those who would bow the knee to the Lord. Those who would, Joel chapter 2 verse 32, "call on the name of the Lord and be saved."

### **The Sum of the Prophecy**

And so this is the picture that we have in the prophecy of Joel given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit concerning the coming of God the Holy Spirit in this present age of the New Testament church. God promised to "pour out" His Spirit on all those who would call upon His name and be saved, both Jew and Gentile, and God would do so with remarkable demonstrations of the power of the Spirit.

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Now dear friends, this is all that we are going to be able to cover in today's broadcast. There is much more that we need to see and to understand concerning the essentials of the person and work of God the Holy Spirit in the Christian as an individual and in the church as a body.

### **No Second-Class Christians**

But let me leave you with this point today: Let me emphasize to you once again that if you have called upon the name of the Lord in order to be saved, that in itself is primary evidence of the active work of God the Holy Spirit in your heart. And that work is not limited to Jew, or to Gentile, or to any other race or class or nation.

The grace of God and the gifts of God are not limited by those distinctions. Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved by the application of the saving work of Jesus Christ to the sinner, whoever that sinner may be, by the sovereign work of God the Holy Spirit. There are no first- or second- or third-class citizens in the kingdom of God. We have all received the same Spirit. We have all received the same great indwelling Gift.

And as we continue in our next broadcast, I want to take you next to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ as we find them in the Gospel accounts, in John chapter 14 and elsewhere, where we find the Lord Jesus explaining to us what the work of the poured out Holy Spirit of God would be in the life of each blood-bought member of his true church in this present age. And we shall see that that work has to do with

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setting our minds, and our affections, and our interests "on things above," as Colossians chapter 3 tells us, "where Christ, is sitting at the right hand of God."

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